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FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN GEORGIA

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General (A/50/731/Add.2), which contains the financial performance report of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) for the period from 16 May 1995 to 12 January 1996. During its consideration of the report, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information.

2. UNOMIG was established by the Security Council in its resolution 858 (1993) of 24 August 1993 for an initial period of six months. Its mandate has since then been extended and adjusted by the Council in subsequent resolutions, the latest being resolution 1065 (1996) of 12 July 1996, which extended the mandate of the Observer Mission from 13 July 1996 until 31 January 1997, subject to a review by the Council of the mandate of UNOMIG in the event of any changes that may be made in the mandate of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peacekeeping force.

3. The report of the Secretary-General (A/50/731/Add.2) contains information on the financial performance of UNOMIG for the period from 16 May 1995 to 12 January 1996. The report also outlines the action required to be taken by the General Assembly at its fifty-first session in connection with the financing of UNOMIG.

4. As indicated in paragraph 9 of the report, total expenditure for the period from 16 May 1995 to 12 January 1996 amounts to $9,978,000 gross ($9,502,400 net), compared to an appropriation of $11,948,718 gross ($11,220,568 net) provided by the General Assembly in its resolution 49/231 B of 12 July 1995, the resulting unencumbered balance being $1,970,718. In addition, the Advisory Committee was informed during its deliberations that, as at 23 September 1996, outstanding assessment stood at $9,014,272.

5. The unencumbered balance of $1,970,718 results primarily from savings for air operations, military personnel costs, civilian personnel costs, other equipment and staff assessment, as indicated in annexes I and II of the report.

6. Savings totalling $893,800 are indicated under item 6, air operations. They result basically from the early release of the fixed-wing aircraft for which the contractor was unable to obtain the necessary landing permits allowing for its effective operation. A Fokker F-27 fixed-wing aircraft, subsequently provided as a voluntary contribution by the Government of Switzerland, replaced the aircraft and the practical problems involved were solved. Under this new arrangement the Mission only incurs costs related to airport handling fees and aircrew subsistence allowance.

7. Savings amounting to $198,000 were also realized under item 1, military personnel costs. The bulk of it, or $189,000, was related to mission subsistence allowance, owing to the departure of military observers prior to the arrival of their replacement in the mission area. The Secretariat confirmed, however, that this time lag had not affected the mandate of the Mission.

8. An amount of $533,300 was saved under item 2, civilian personnel costs. Of that total, $375,100 corresponds to international staff salaries of $197,300 to mission subsistence allowance, resulting from a higher than expected vacancy rate owing to the time lag in the rotation of staff, as indicated in paragraph 5 of annex II to the report. However, additional requirements for local staff salaries resulted from the implementation of two salary increases effective 1 May 1995 and 1 June 1995 for a total of $90,100. The Advisory Committee sought further clarification from the Secretariat on the matter, inquiring as to the basis for the salary increases and whether they could not have been anticipated, as is the case with the regular budget.

9. In this regard, the Advisory Committee was informed that the salary increases were based on surveys carried out by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The first salary increase, effective 1 May 1995, was the result of an interim survey, representing an across the board increase of 37 per cent. The second increase, of 13 per cent, effective 1 June 1995, was authorized following a comprehensive salary survey conducted by UNDP. Provision for the increases could not have been included in the budget for the period under review, since they were not approved by the Office of Human Resources Management until July 1995 and January 1996, respectively.

10. The Advisory Committee was informed that in annex IV of the report, the authorized staffing column should read 139 instead of 136 for the total of civilian staff.

11. The committee notes an overrun of $11,200 under transport operations. As indicated in paragraph 13 of annex II of the report, this was due to higher than anticipated costs related to spare parts, repairs and maintenance for vehicles transferred from other missions. Upon inquiry, the Committee was informed that most of the vehicles had already been utilized by the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), which, coupled with the rugged terrain and poor road conditions in Georgia, had increased the repairs on those vehicles.

12. Paragraph 10 of the Secretary-General's report indicates that the action to be taken by the General Assembly in connection with the financing of the Observer Mission is a decision on the treatment of the unencumbered balance of $1,970,718 gross ($1,718,168 net). The Advisory Committee recommends that the unencumbered balance be credited to Member States against their assessment for the financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia.